

THE BEST OF

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# ORBIT



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# T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

## Isaac Asimov

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Adaptation ♦ Fred Burke

Art ♦ John Bolton

## Neal Barrett, Jr.

*Ginny Sweethips' Flying Circus* .....Page 14

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Art ♦ Mark Pacella

## Frederik Pohl

*Fermi And Frost*.....Page 33

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# ORBIT







THE SCENE WAS EARTH.

NOT THAT THE BEINGS ON THE STARSHIP THOUGHT OF IT AS EARTH. TO THEM IT WAS A SERIES OF SYMBOLS STORED IN A COMPUTER; IT WAS THE THIRD PLANET OF A STAR LOCATED AT A CERTAIN POSITION WITH RESPECT TO THE LINE CONNECTING THEIR HOME PLANET WITH THE BLACK HOLE THAT MARKED THE GALAXY'S CENTER, AND MOVING WITH A CERTAIN VELOCITY WITH REFERENCE TO IT.

THE TIME WAS 15,000 B.C., MORE OR LESS.

ADAPTED BY FEED BURKE  
ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN BOLTON  
LETTERED BY WAYNE TELUKIAN  
EDITED BY LETITIA GLOZER

NOT THAT THE BEINGS ON THE STARSHIP THOUGHT OF IT AS 15,000 B.C. TO THEM, IT WAS A CERTAIN PERIOD OF TIME MARKED OFF ACCORDING TO THEIR LOCAL SYSTEM.



Isaac Asimov's  
*Nothing  
FOR  
Nothing*

THIS IS  
A WASTE OF TIME.  
THE PLANET IS LARGELY  
FROZEN. LET US  
LEAVE.

NO,  
CAPTAIN.

AND WHEN THE SHIP'S EXPLORER  
SAID NO, THAT WAS THAT.

AS LONG AS A STARSHIP WAS IN SPACE, THE CAPTAIN WAS SUPREME, BUT PLACE THAT SHIP IN ORBIT ABOUT A PLANET AND THE EXPLORER COULD NOT BE CHALLENGED. HE KNEW NOTHING THAT WAS HIS SPECIALTY.

AND THIS EXPLORER WAS IN AN IMPREGNABLE POSITION. IT HAD BEEN HE AND HE ALONE WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FACT THAT THIS STARSHIP HAD WON THREE AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE FOR THE WORK DONE IN THE LAST THREE EXPEDITIONS. THREE FOR THREE.

SO WHEN THE EXPLORER SAID 'NO,' THE CAPTAIN COULD NOT DREAM OF 'YES' IN THE UNLIKELY CASE THAT HE WOULD HAVE DREAMED IT. THE CREW WOULD HAVE MUTILATED AN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE MIGHT BE. TO THE CAPTAIN, A PLEASANT SPECTRAL DISK TO SUSPEND IN THE MAIN GALLON; BUT TO THE CREW, IT MEANT A SPECTACULAR ADDITION TO TAKE-HOME PRIZE. AND THIS EXPLORER HAD BROUGHT THEM THAT THREE TIMES. THREE FOR THREE.

SURELY THAT'S NOT UNPRECEDENTED.

AND THAT WAS THAT, OF COURSE THERE WERE AT LEAST HALF A TRILLION PLANETARY WORLDS IN THE GALAXY, IF ONE ONLY COUNTED THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH STARS.

WHAT IS STRANGE ABOUT THIS ONE?

EVEN WITH COMPUTERS TO HELP, NO STARSHIP COULD KNOW THEM ALL, BUT AN EXPERIENCED EXPLORER, BY DIRT OF LACKING INTEREST IN ANYTHING ELSE, OF STUDYING EVERY EXPLORATORY REPORT PUBLISHED, OF CONSIDERING ENDLESS CORRELATIONS, AND--PRESUMABLY--PLAYING WITH STATISTICS EVEN IN HIS SLEEP, SEEMED TO HAVE WHAT SEEMED TO OTHERS A MYSTICAL INTUITION ABOUT SUCH THINGS.

THE PATTERN HERE IS STRANGE. I AM NOT SURE EXACTLY HOW OR EXACTLY WHY, BUT THE PATTERN OF LIFE AND OF INTELLIGENCE IS STRANGE. WE MUST EXAMINE IT MORE CAREFULLY.

WE'LL HAVE TO SEND OUT PROBES IN FULL INTERLOCKING PROGRAM.

IT'LL TAKE WEEKS! IS THIS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY?

NO STRANGE WORLD SHOULD BE LEFT UNEXAMINED.

THIS PRELIMINARY PROBE SHOWS INTELLIGENCE--AND ON A FROZEN WORLD.

I RATHER THINK SO.

THE PROBES BROUGHT  
BACK EXACTLY WHAT  
THE CAPTAIN EX-  
PECTED, AND IN  
GREAT DETAIL.

STRANGE!  
SUMMON THE  
TRADER.

TO WHAT  
END, EXPLORER?  
WHAT CAN WE  
EXPECT AT THIS  
LEVEL?

THEY  
HAVE  
TOOLS.

STONE!  
BONE! WOOD!  
OR THIS PLANET'S  
EQUIVALENT. THAT'S  
ALL! SURELY WE  
CAN FIND NOTHING  
IN THAT.

"INTELLIGENT SPECIES  
RATHER REMINISCENT  
OF THE LESSER  
BREEDS OF THE INNER  
PROXIMAL REGIONS OF  
THE FIFTH ARM OF THE  
GALAXY! THIS SPECIES  
MAY BE OF INTEREST  
TO ARCHEOLOGISTS,  
BUT THEY'RE ONLY  
AT THE FIRST LEVEL  
OF TECHNOLOGY!  
THERE'S NOTHING  
USEFUL HERE!"

AND  
YET THERE IS  
SOMETHING  
STRANGE IN THE  
PATTERN.

MAY I  
KNOW WHAT  
THAT MIGHT BE,  
EXPLORER?

IF I KNEW  
WHAT IT MIGHT  
BE, CAPTAIN, IT WOULD  
NOT BE STRANGE, AND  
I WOULD NOT HAVE  
TO FIND OUT. REALLY,  
CAPTAIN—I MUST  
INSIST ON THE  
TRADER.

THE CAPTAIN MIGHT  
NAVIGATE A STARSHIP  
AND THE EXPLORER  
MIGHT DETECT USEFUL  
CIVILIZATIONS BY THE  
MOST TENUOUS OF  
SIGNS; BUT IN THE  
FINAL CLUTCH, IT WAS  
THE TRADER AND HIS  
TEAM WHO FACED  
THE ALIENS AND WHO  
PLUCKED OUT OF  
THEIR MINDS AND CULT-  
TURE THAT WHICH  
WAS USEFUL AND GAVE  
IN RETURN SOMETHING  
THEY FOUND USEFUL.

THIS HAS DONE AT GREAT  
RISK. THE ALIEN ECOLOGY  
MUST NOT BE DISRUPTED.  
ALIEN INTELLIGENCES  
MUST NOT BE HARMED  
NOT EVEN TO SAVE ONE'S  
OWN LIFE. THERE WERE  
GOOD REASONS FOR  
THAT ON THE COSMIC  
SCALE. AND TRADERS  
WERE AMPLY REWARDED  
FOR THE RISKS THEY  
RAN—BUT WHY RUN  
USELESS RISKS?

THERE  
IS NOTHING  
THERE.

MY  
INTERPRETATION  
OF THE PROBES DATA  
IS THAT WE'RE DEALING  
WITH SEMI-INTELLIGENT  
ANIMALS. THEIR  
USEFULNESS IS NIL.  
THEIR DANGER IS  
GREAT.

WE KNOW  
HOW TO DEAL WITH  
TRULY INTELLIGENT ALIENS  
AND TRADER TEAMS ARE  
RARELY KILLED BY THEM.  
WHO KNOWS HOW THESE  
ANIMALS WILL REACT—  
AND YOU KNOW WE ARE  
NOT ALLOWED TO  
DEFEND OURSELVES  
PROPERLY.

BUT, TRADER,  
THESE ANIMALS, IF  
THEY ARE NO MORE THAN  
THAT, HAVE INTERESTINGLY  
ADAPTED THEMSELVES TO  
THE ICE. THERE ARE  
SUBTLE VARIATIONS IN  
THE PATTERN HERE I DO  
NOT UNDERSTAND, BUT MY  
CONSIDERED OPINION IS  
THAT THEY WILL NOT BE  
DANGEROUS AND THAT  
THEY MAY EVEN  
BE USEFUL.

I FEEL THEY  
ARE WORTH CLOSER  
EXAMINATION.

WHAT CAN  
BE GAINED FROM  
A STONE AGE  
INTELLIGENCE?

THAT IS  
FOR YOU TO  
FIND OUT.

OF COURSE,  
THAT IS WHAT IT  
COMES TO—FOR US  
TO FIND OUT.



THE TRADER KNEW FULL WELL THE HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE STARSHIP EXPEDITIONS. THERE HAD BEEN A TIME, A MILLION YEARS BEFORE, WHEN THERE HAD BEEN NO TRADERS, EXPLORERS, OR CAPTAINS BUT ONLY ANCESTRAL ANIMALS WITH DEVELOPING MINDS AND A STONE AGE TECHNOLOGY--MUCH LIKE THE ANIMALS ON THE WORLD THEY WERE NOW ORBITING.

HOW SLOW THE ADVANCE, HOW PAINFULLY SLOW THE SELF-GENERATED PROCESS--UNTIL THE THIRD-LEVEL CIVILIZATION HAD BEEN REACHED THEN HAD COME THE STARSHIPS AND THE CHANCE OF CROSS-FERTILIZATION OF CULTURES. THEN HAD COME PROGRESS.

WITH RESPECT, EXPLORER...I GRANT YOU INTUITIONAL EXPERIENCE. WILL YOU GRANT MY PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. THOUGH IT IS LESS DRAMATIC? THERE IS NO WAY IN WHICH ANYTHING BELOW A THIRD-LEVEL CIVILIZATION CAN HAVE ANYTHING WE CAN USE.

THAT IS A GENERALIZATION THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE TRUE.

WITH RESPECT, EXPLORER, IT IS TRUE. AND EVEN IF THOSE--THOSE SEMI-ANIMALS HAD SOMETHING WE COULD USE, AND I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT IT MIGHT BE, WHAT CAN WE GIVE THEM IN EXCHANGE?

THE EXPLORER WAS SILENT.

AT THIS LEVEL THERE IS NO WAY IN WHICH A PROTO-INTELLIGENCE CAN ACCEPT AN ALIEN STIMULATION. THE MENTOLOSISTS ARE AGREED ON THAT. PROGRESS MUST BE SELF-GENERATED UNTIL AT LEAST THE SECOND LEVEL IS REACHED. AND WE MUST MAKE A RETURN; WE CAN TAKE NOTHING FOR NOTHING.

AND THAT MAKES SENSE, OF COURSE. BY STIMULATING THESE INTELLIGENCES TO ADVANCE, WE CAN HARVEST THEM AGAIN AT A LATER VISIT.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE REASON FOR IT. IT IS PART OF THE TRADITION OF MY PROFESSION. WE DO NO HARM UNDER ANY CONDITIONS AND WE GIVE IN RETURN FOR WHAT WE TAKE.

HERE THERE IS NOTHING WE WILL WANT TO TAKE, AND EVEN IF WE FIND SOMETHING, THERE WILL BE NOTHING THAT WE CAN GIVE IN RETURN. WE WASTE TIME.

I ASK YOU TO VISIT SOME CENTER OF POPULATION, TRADER. I WILL ABIDE BY YOUR DECISION WHEN YOU RETURN.

AND THAT WAS THAT, TOO.



FOR TWO DAYS THE SMALL TRADER MODULE FLASHED OVER THE SURFACE OF THE PLANET SEARCHING FOR ANY EVIDENCE OF A REASONABLE LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGY. THERE WAS NONE.

RECORD! RECORD! THE ANIMALS, BOTH UNINTELLIGENT AND SUPPOSEDLY INTELLIGENT, AND ANY ARTIFACTS OF THEIRS WE CAN FIND MAKE SURE THE RECORDS ARE THOROUGHLY HOLOGRAPHIC.

BUT, MAESTRO, WE CAN ALREADY SEE--

WE CAN ALREADY SEE, BUT WE MUST HAVE A RECORD TO CONVINCE OUR EXPLORER OUT OF HIS DREAMS OR WE'LL REMAIN HERE FOREVER.

HE IS A GOOD EXPLORER.

A COMPLETE SEARCH COULD TAKE YEARS, BUT WAS SCARCELY WORTH IT. THE HIGHEST TECHNOLOGY WAS ALWAYS FLAUNTED, FOR IT HAD NO ENEMY THAT WAS THE UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE OF TRADERS EVERYWHERE.

WE'LL LAND HERE. IT SEEMS TO BE A GOOD-SIZED CONCENTRATION OF INTELLIGENCES WE CAN DO NO BETTER.



WHAT CAN WE DO WITH EVEN THESE, MAESTRO?

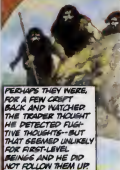
HE HAS BEEN A GOOD EXPLORER, BUT DOES THAT MEAN HE WILL BE GOOD FOREVER? HIS VERY SUCCESSSES HAVE MADE HIM ACCEPT HIMSELF AT TOO HIGH AN EVALUATION, PERHAPS. SO WE MUST CONVINCE HIM OF REALITY-- IF WE CAN.

THE ATMOSPHERE WOULD SUPPORT THEM, BUT THE FEELING OF EXPOSURE TO THE RAW WINDS OF AN OPEN PLANET WOULD DISCOMFORT THEM, EVEN IF THE ATMOSPHERE AND TEMPERATURE WERE PERFECT-- WHICH THEY WERENT.

THE GRAVITY WAS A TOUCH HIGH, AS WAS THE LIGHT LEVEL, BUT THEY COULD BEAR IT.

THE TRADER AND HIS CREW DID NOT TRY TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY OR TO MAKE FRIENDLY GESTURES. WHO KNEW WHAT GESTURES MIGHT BE CONSIDERED FRIENDLY BY AN ALIENT

THE TRADER SET UP A MENTAL FIELD INSTEAD AND SATURATED IT WITH THE VIBRATIONS OF HARMLESSNESS AND PEACE AND HOPED THAT THE MENTAL FIELDS OF THE CREATURES WERE SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED TO RESPOND.



PERHAPS THEY WERE, FOR A FEW CRIBT BACK AND WATCHER THE TRADER THOUGHT HE DETECTED FUGITIVE THOUGHTS-- BUT THAT SEEMED UNLIKELY FOR FIRST-LEVEL BEINGS AND HE DID NOT FOLLOW THEM UP.

THE TRADER WAS RELIEVED BY THE ALIENS' RETREAT ANY SIGN OF NON-BELLIGERENCE WAS WELCOME TO THOSE WHO WERE NOT PERMITTED TO DEFEND THEMSELVES.

**MAESTRO!  
HERE! COME QUICKLY!**

SPECIFIC DIRECTIONS WERE NOT GIVEN. THE TRADER HAD TO FOLLOW THE BEAM. OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CREW WERE CONVERGING, BUT HE KNEW HE WOULD ARRIVE FIRST.

YEA BUT LOOK!

WHAT IS IT?

THIS IS A NATURAL HOLLOW, NOT A TECHNOLOGICAL PRODUCT.

**STAY AWAY!  
REPEAT—  
STAY AWAY!**

IS THIS OF TECHNOLOGICAL ORIGIN?

YES, MASETRO. YOU CAN SEE IT IS ONLY PARTIALLY COMPLETED. I FOUND ONE OF THE INTEL-LIGENT CREATURES AT WORK IN HERE. THIS IS HIS LIGHT SOURCE—BURNING VESSE-TATION. THESE ARE HIS TOOLS.

AND WHERE IS HE?

HE FLEW.

DID YOU ACTUALLY SEE HIM?

I RECORDED HIM.

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS?

NO, MASETRO.

OR HEARD OF ANYTHING LIKE THIS?

NO, MASETRO.





I HAVE PREPARED A PRESENTATION FOR THE ENTIRE STARGHIP, BUT I MUST SHOW IT TO YOU FIRST, EXPLORER--WITH DEEP RESPECT AND WITH APOLOGIES FOR MARKED THOUGHTS.

YOU WERE RIGHT. THERE WAS SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THIS PLANET. THOUGH THE INTELLIGENCES WERE BARELY FIRST LEVEL AND THEIR TECHNOLOGY PRIMITIVE IN THE EXTREME, THEY HAD DEVELOPED A CONCEPT WE HAD NEVER HAD--AND ONE THAT, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, I'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED ON ANY OTHER WORLD.

I CANNOT IMAGINE WHAT IT MIGHT BE.

THE CAPTAIN WAS QUITE AWARE THAT TRADERS SOMETIMES OVERPRaised THEIR PURCHASES TO MAGNIFY THEIR OWN WORTH.



IT IS A FORM OF VISUAL ART.

PLAYING WITH COLOR?

AND SHAPE--TO MOST STARTLING EFFECT. OBSERVE!



UGLY OBJECTS.

THE HOLOGRAPHIC RECORDING BROUGHT THE HERD TO A HALT, GLAMPED IT DOWN TO A STILL. IT MAGNIFIED, AND A SINGLE BEAST FILLED THE VIEW.



OBSERVE THIS ANIMAL.

--AND NOW OBSERVE THIS ARTIFICIAL CONCOCTION OF A PRIMITIVE CONCOCTION OF OIL AND COLORED MINERAL, WHICH WE FOUND SWEALED ON THE WALL OF A CAVE.


WHAT A PECULIAR SIMILARITY..




THERE IT WAS AGAIN! NOT QUITE THE ANIMAL AS HOLOGRAPHED--FLAT, BUT VIBRANT.

NOT PECULIAR--DELIBERATE!

THE EXPLORER SAID NOTHING. HE WAS THE MORE UNEASY OF THE TWO.



THESE WERE DOZENS OF SUCH FIGURES IN DIFFERENT POSSES—OF DIFFERENT ANIMALS. THE LIKENESSES WERE TOO DETAILED TO BE FORTUITOUS. IMAGINE THE BOLDNESS OF THE CONCEPTION—TO PLACE COLORS IN PLEASING SHAPES AND COMBINATIONS, AND IN SUCH A WAY AS TO DECEIVE THE EYE INTO THINKING IT IS LOOKING AT A REAL OBJECT. THESE ORGANISMS HAVE PERFORMED AN ACT THAT REPRESENTS REALITY.



AND THAT'S NOT ALL. WE FOUND IT DONE IN THREE DIMENSIONS ALSO. THESE ARE CLEARLY INTENDED TO REPRESENT THEMSELVES.

DID YOU SEE THESE MANUFACTURED?

NO, THAT I DID NOT, CAPTAIN. ONE OF MY MEN SAW A PLANETARY BEING SAMBAING COLORED ON ONE OF THE CAVE REPRESENTATIONS, BUT THESE WE FOUND ALREADY FORMED. STILL, NO OTHER EXPLANATION IS POSSIBLE THAN THAT THEY WERE DELIBERATELY SHAPED. THESE OBJECTS COULD NOT HAVE ASSUMED THESE SHAPES BY CHANCE PROCESSES.

THESE ARE CURIOS, BUT ONE DOESN'T FOLLOW THE MOTIVE. WOULD NOT HOLOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES SERVE THE PURPOSE BETTER—AT SUCH TIMES AS THESE ARE DEVELOPED, OF COURSE?

THESE PRIMITIVES HAVE NO CONCEPTION THAT HOLOGRAPHY COULD SOMEDAY BE DEVELOPED AND COULD NOT WAIT THE MILLION YEARS REQUIRED. THEN, TOO, MAYBE HOLOGRAPHY IS NOT BETTER IF YOU COMPARE THE REPRESENTATIONS WITH THE ORIGINALS. YOU WILL NOTICE THAT THE REPRESENTATIONS ARE SIMPLIFIED AND DISTORTED IN SUBTLE WAYS DESIGNED TO BRING CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS INTO FOCUS.

I BELIEVE THIS FORM OF ART IMPROVES ON THE ORIGINAL IN SOME WAYS AND CERTAINLY HAS SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO SAY.

I STAND IN AWE OF YOUR ABILITIES, EXPLORER. CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW YOU SENSED THE UNQUENCHED OF THIS INTELLIGENCE?

I DID NOT SUSPECT THIS AT ALL. IT IS INTERESTING AND I SEE ITS WORTH—ALTHOUGH I WONDER IF WE COULD OURSELVES PROPERLY CONTROL OUR COLORS AND SHAPES IN ORDER TO FORCE THEM INTO SUCH REPRESENTATIONAL FORM. YET THIS DOES NOT MATCH THE UNLIKENESS WITHIN ME—

—WHAT I WONDER IS HOW YOU CAME INTO POSSESSION OF THESE? WHAT DID YOU GIVE IN EXCHANGE? IT IS THERE I SEE THE STRANGENESS LIE!



WELL, IN A WAY YOU'RE RIGHT. QUITE STRANGELY, I DID NOT THINK I COULD GIVE ANYTHING SINCE THE ORGANISMS ARE SO PRIMITIVE. BUT THIS DISCOVERY SEEMS TOO IMPORTANT TO SACRIFICE WITHOUT SOME EFFORT.

YES, I SUCCEEDED THE BEINGS KILL SUCH ANIMALS AS THEY REPRESENT IN COLOR, BY THROWING LONG STICKS TIPPED WITH SHARPENED STONES. THESE PENETRATE THE HIDES OF THE ANIMALS, WOUND AND WEAKEN THEM. THEY CAN THEN BE KILLED BY THE BEINGS WHO ARE INDIVIDUALLY SMALLER AND WEAKER THAN THE ANIMAL THEY HUNT.

I POINTED OUT THAT A SMALLER, STONE-TIPPED STICK COULD BE HURLED FORWARD WITH GREATER FORCE AND EFFECT AND WITH A LONGER RANGE IF A COED UNDER TENSION WERE USED AS THE MECHANISM OF PROPULSION.

SUCH DEVICES HAVE BEEN ENCOUNTERED AMONG PRIMITIVE INTELLIGENCES WHICH WERE, HOWEVER, FAR ADVANCED BEYOND THESE. PALEONTOLOGISTS CALL IT A BOW-AND-ARROW.



I THEREFORE CHOSE FROM AMONG THE GROUP OF BEINGS ONE WHOSE MENTAL FIELD SEEMED SOMEWHAT MORE INTENSE THAN THAT OF THE OTHERS AND ATTEMPTED TO TRANSFER TO HIM A GIFT IN EXCHANGE.

AND SUCCEEDED OF COURSE.

HOW COULD THE KNOWLEDGE BE ABSORBED? IT COULDN'T BE—NOT AT THIS LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT.



BUT IT WAS, UNMISTAKABLY, THE RESPONSE OF THE MENTAL FIELD WAS ONE OF RAGNAT AT ALMOST UNBESPEAKABLE INTENSITY. SURELY YOU DO NOT THINK I WOULD HAVE TAKEN THESE ART OBJECTS, WERE THEY TWENTY TIMES AS VALUABLE, IF I HAD NOT BEEN CONVINCED THAT I HAD MADE A RETURN? NOTHING FOR NOTHING, CAPTAIN.

THERE IS THE STRANGENESS TO ACCEPT.

BUT SURELY, TEADER, WE CANNOT DO THIS. THEY ARE NOT RAGNAT. WE ARE HARMING THEM. THEY WILL USE THE BOW-AND-ARROW TO MOUND EACH OTHER AND NOT THE BEASTS ALONE.



WE DO NOT HARM THEM AND WE DID NOT HARM THEM. WHAT THEY DO TO EACH OTHER AND WHERE THEY END AS A RESULT, A MILLION YEARS FROM NOW, IS THEIR CONCERN.

BUT THEY ACCEPTED AND THEY FLOURISH AMID THE ICE AND IN TWENTY THOUSAND YEARS IT WILL BE OUR CONCERN.

HE KNEW THEY WOULD NOT BELIEVE HIM, AND HE DESPAIRED.







THEY'RE TAKING  
THEIR SWEET TIME,  
DEL. DAMNED IF  
THEY'RE NOT.

THEY'RE ITCHY.  
EVERYONE'S LOOKING  
TO STAY ALIVE.

FIRST CHURCH  
OF THE  
UNLEADED GOD  
& ACE HIGH  
REFINERY



I SURE DON'T CARE FOR SITTING OUT HERE IN THE SUN. MY PRICE IS GOING UP BY THE MINUTE. YOU WAIT AND SEE IF IT DOESN'T.

DON'T GET GREEDY. AND HERE THEY COME. GET READY.



POSSUM DARK WATCHED THE HEAT DISTORT THE FLATS. HE DIDN'T CARE FOR THE EFFECT.

HE WAS SUSPICIOUS OF THINGS LESS THAN CUT AND DRIED.

GINNY  
SWEETTHIPS'  
FLYING  
CIRCUS  
SEX  
TACOS and  
DANGEROUS  
DRUGS

BY NEAL BARRETT, JR.  
ADAPTED BY LESLIE CLAGUE  
AND STEVE NILES  
ART: MARK PACELLA  
COLORS: SAM PARSONS  
LETTERS: M. EISMAN  
EDITOR: LETITIA GLOZER



GENTS, YOU'LL BE MORE THAN GLAD YOU WAITED. I'M BRINGING BEAUTY TO THE WASTELANDS. GENTS. LUST THE WAY YOU LIKE IT, PASSION UNRESTRAINED, SEXUAL CRIMES YOU NEVER DREAMED!

GINNY SWEETHIPS, GENTS. GIVING YOU HER INTERPRETATION OF BARBARA JEAN, THE CHEERLEADER NEXT DOOR. INNOCENT AS SNOW, YET A LITTLE BIT WICKED AND WILLING TO LEARN. NOW, WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?



NEXT, DEL INTRODUCED NURSE NORA, A SAUCY REDHEAD. AN ANGEL OF MERCY, WEAK AS SOUP IN THE HANDS OF PATIENT PETE.



MOMENTS LATER, HAIR BLACK AS A RAVEN, SHE WAS SCHOOLTEACHER SALLY, COLD AS WELL WATER UNTIL STEVE THE BAD STUDENT LOOSED THE FURY CHAINED WITHIN.





BUT  
IS SHE  
REAL?

NOW, I DON'T  
BLAME YOU, SIR. I'VE  
HAD A FEW DOLLY DROIDS  
MYSELF. A PLASTIC EMBRACE  
AT BEST. NO, SIR, GINNY'S  
REAL AS RAIN, AND SHE'S  
YOURS IN THE ROLE  
OF YOUR CHOICE.

SEVEN MINUTES  
OF BLISS, AND ALL FOR  
ONLY A U.S. GALLON  
OF GAS!

THAT'S A  
CHEAT!

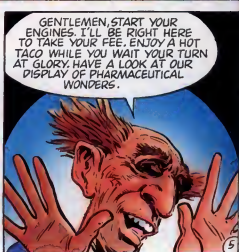
AIN'T A WOMAN  
WORTH IT!

IT'S NOT MY  
PLACE TO DRIVE A  
FELLOW TO REST HIS  
MANLY FRAME ON  
GOLDEN THIGHS.

NOT IF HE  
THINKS IT'S NOT  
WORTH THE FEE,  
NO SIR.

DEL COULD SMELL THEIR DISCONTENT,  
READ SLY THOUGHTS ABOVE THEIR  
HEADS. THERE WAS ALWAYS THIS  
MOMENT, WHEN IT OCCURRED TO THEM  
THAT GINNY'S DELIGHTS MIGHT BE  
OBTAINED FOR FREE.

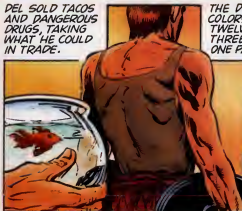




DEL SNIFFED EACH GALLON  
IN CASE SOME BUFFOON THOUGHT  
WATER WOULD GET HIM BY.



DEL SOLD TACOS  
AND DANGEROUS  
DRUGS, TAKING  
WHAT HE COULD  
IN TRADE.



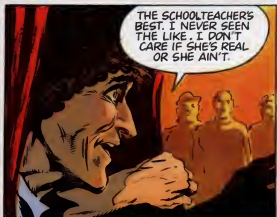
THE DRUGS WERE DIFFERENT  
COLORS BUT ALL THE SAME:  
TWELVE PARTS OREGANO,  
THREE PARTS RABBIT SHIT,  
ONE PART MARIJUANA STEMS.



HAVE HER DO  
THE NURSE. YOU WON'T  
REGRET IT.



THE SCHOOTEACHER'S  
BEST. I NEVER SEEN  
THE LIKE. I DON'T  
CARE IF SHE'S REAL  
OR SHE AIN'T.

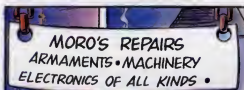


WHAT'S  
IN THESE  
TACOS?

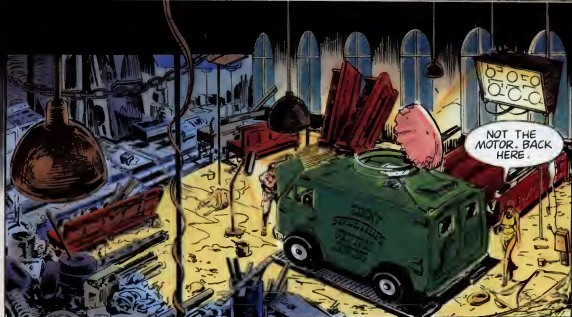


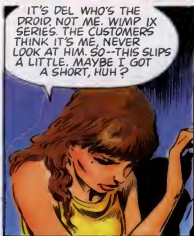
NOBODY  
YOU KNOW,  
MISTER.











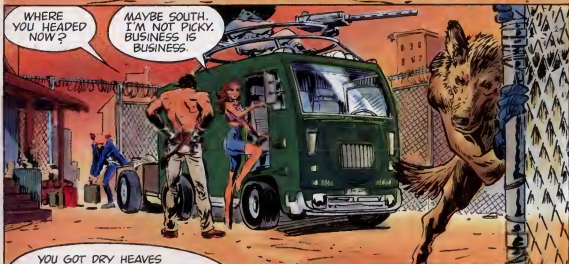


I'M DOG QUICK.  
I DON'T MUCH CARE  
FOR POSSUMS.

I DON'T  
MUCH CARE  
FOR DOGS.

YOU EVER  
PLAY ANY  
CARDS?

SOME. I  
GUESS I COULD  
HANDLE MYSELF  
WITH A DOG.



WHERE  
YOU HEADED  
NOW?

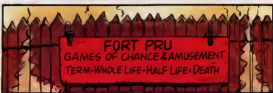
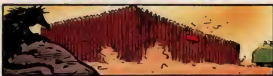
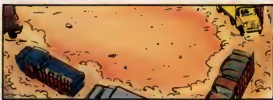
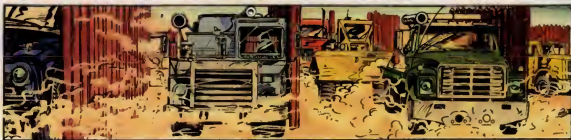
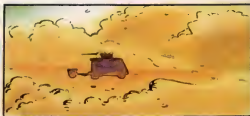
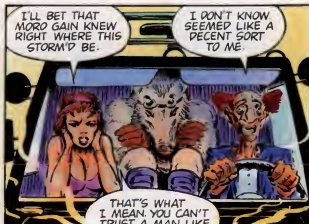
MAYBE SOUTH.  
I'M NOT PICKY.  
BUSINESS IS  
BUSINESS.

YOU GOT DRY HEAVES  
SOUTH AND EAST. DOOM CITY  
AFTER THAT. STRAIGHT DOWN AND  
YOU MIGHT RUN INTO FORT PRU. BUNCH  
OF INSURANCE HACKERS. STAY CLEAR  
OF THEM. ISN'T WORTH WHATEVER  
YOU'LL MAKE.

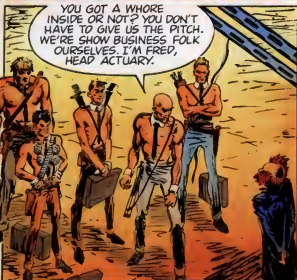
YOU'VE BEEN A  
BIG HELP. I'M ABOUT  
AS GRATEFUL AS  
I CAN BE.



YOU EVER LISTEN  
TO ANYONE, LADY?  
I'M GIVING YOU  
GOOD ADVICE.







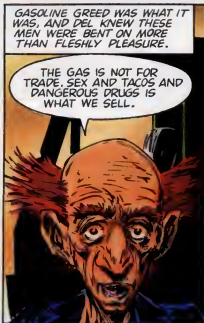
YOU GOT A WHORE  
INSIDE OR NOT? YOU DON'T  
HAVE TO GIVE US THE PITCH.  
WE'RE SHOW BUSINESS FOLK  
OURSELVES. I'M FRED,  
HEAD ACTUARY.



HEAVY BOND, LINEN  
WEAVE, NO. 25, WITH  
ERASERS, CLAIM FORMS,  
MAIM FORMS, FORMS OF  
EVERY SORT.



AND YOU GOT GAS IN  
THAT TRAILER. I CAN SMELL  
IT FROM HERE. FRIEND, WE CAN  
SURE TALK BUSINESS WITH YOU  
THERE. I GOT SEVENTEEN  
GUZZLERS RUNNIN' DRY.



GASOLINE GREED WAS WHAT IT  
WAS, AND DEL KNEW THESE  
MEN WERE BENT ON MORE  
THAN FLESHLY PLEASURE.

THE GAS IS NOT FOR  
TRADE. SEX AND TACOS AND  
DANGEROUS DRUGS IS  
WHAT WE SELL.

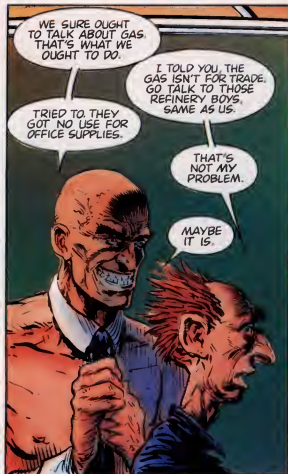


NO PROBLEM. JUST  
AN IDEA. WELL, YOU GET  
THAT LITTLE GAL OUT HERE  
AND I'LL BRING IN  
MY CREW.



DEL KNEW WITH ANDROIDIAL DREAD THAT  
WHEN THEY COULD, THE INSURANCE  
MEN WOULD MAKE THEIR PLAY.

IT SEEMED TO BE GOING WELL. CHEERLEADER BARBARA AWOKE FORGOTTEN WET DREAMS, SET THEM UP FOR SALLY THE TEACH AND NORA NURSE.



WE SURE OUGHT TO TALK ABOUT GAS. THAT'S WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO.

I TOLD YOU, THE GAS ISN'T FOR TRADE. GO TALK TO THOSE REFINERY BOYS, SAME AS US.

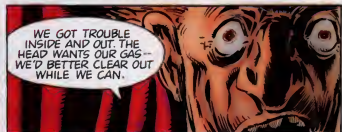
TRIED TO. THEY GOT NO USE FOR OFFICE SUPPLIES.

THAT'S NOT MY PROBLEM.

MAYBE IT IS.

I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, MY FRIEND. USED TO HAVE A CPA DROID JUST LIKE YOU, BEFORE THE WAR.

MAYBE WE CAN TALK.



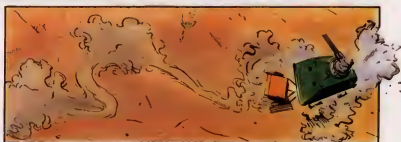
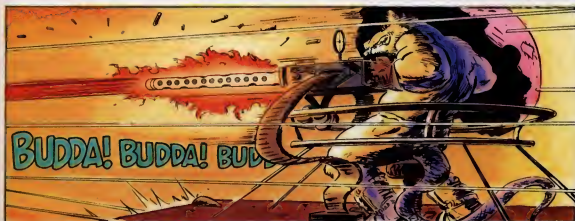
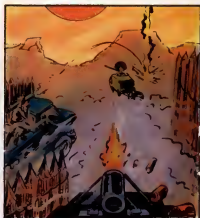


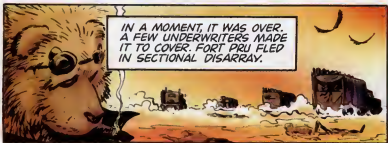
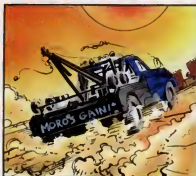


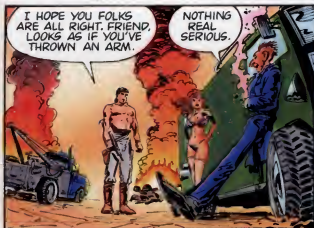
I BETTER  
GIVE HER A  
TRY.

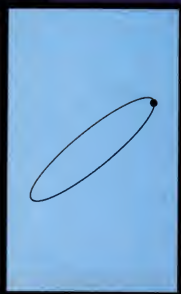
GET READY  
IN THERE, LITTLE  
LADY. I AM GOING  
TO HANDLE ALL YOUR  
POLICY NEEDS!













PROLOGUE:

ON TIMOTHY CLARY'S  
NINTH BIRTHDAY HE  
GOT NO CAKE.

ALL HE HAD TO EAT  
WERE STALE DANISH  
PASTRIES FROM THE  
BUFFET WAGON...



...AND HE WAS  
FEARFULLY  
EMBARRASSED  
BECAUSE HE  
HAD WET HIS  
PANTS.

THREE  
TIMES.



GETTING TO THE TOILETS  
WAS JUST ABOUT IMPOSSIBLE.




DEPARTURES

JOHN F. KENNEDY INT'L AIRPORT

TIMOTHY'S MOTHER HAD GONE  
SOMEWHERE TO TRY TO CALL  
HIS FATHER. THEN THERE  
HAD BEEN A SURGE WHEN  
THREE 747s AT ONCE HAD  
ANNOUNCED BOARDING,  
AND TIMOTHY HAD BEEN  
CARRIED FAR FROM  
WHERE HE HAD  
BEEN LEFT.



GET AWAY! RUN! HIDE!  
PRAY AS HARD AS YOU CAN!



WORSE THAN THAT,  
TIMOTHY WAS VERY  
SICK.

Frederik Pohl's

# FERMI AND FROST

"ATTEMPTED COUP IN  
CUBA ESCALATED QUICKLY  
INTO A TACTICAL NUCLEAR  
EXCHANGE BETWEEN U.S.  
AND SOVIET  
SUBMARINES.



ADAPTED BY: BRENT ERIC ANDERSON  
LETTERS BY: KURT HATHAWAY  
EDITED BY: LETITIA GLOZER

HARRY MALIBERT  
WAS ON HIS WAY TO A  
BRITISH INTERPLANETARY  
SOCIETY SEMINAR IN  
PORTSMOUTH WHEN HIS  
FLIGHT WAS  
EMBARGOED BY  
SOME OFFICIAL  
SOMEWHERE.

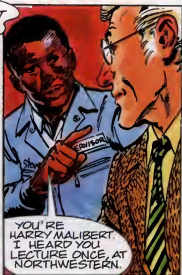


HIS RED AMBASSADOR  
CLUB CARD HAD ONLY  
PROTECTED HIS RE-  
LATIVE SOLITUDE FOR  
A FEW HOURS.





WHEN THE FOOD AND DRINK IN THE MAIN TERMINALS BEGAN TO RUN OUT THE AMBASSADOR CLUB WAS OPENED TO EVERYONE



YOU'RE HARRY MALIBERT. I HEARD YOU LECTURE ONCE, AT NORTHWESTERN.

YOU SHOWED SLIDES OF ARECIBO. YOU SAID THAT RADIO TELESCOPE COULD SEND A MESSAGE AS FAR AS ANDROMEDA... IF THERE WAS ANOTHER AS GOOD TO RECEIVE IT.



YOU REMEMBER VERY WELL

YOU MADE A BIG IMPRESSION.



IT REALLY SOUNDED WONDERFUL, LISTENING FOR MESSAGES FROM SPACE...

...MAYBE MAKING CONTACT...

...YOU MADE ME WONDER WHY WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM THEM ALREADY.

\*MAYBE NOW WE KNOW WHY.\*



DOCTOR MALIBERT...



THIS IS A SPECIAL BULLETIN FROM CNN NEWSWATCH...



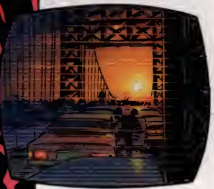
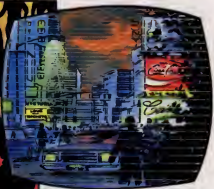
THE PRESIDENT HAS CONFIRMED THAT A NUCLEAR ATTACK HAS BEGUN AGAINST THE UNITED STATES.

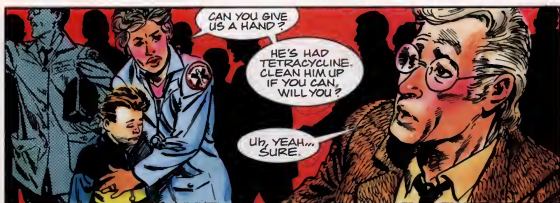
"IF THE BOMBS GO OFF THEN SETI\* WILL BE ENDED FOR A GOOD LONG TIME."

\*SEARCH FOR EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE.



EVERYONE IS ORDERED TO  
SEEK SHELTER AND AWAIT  
FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

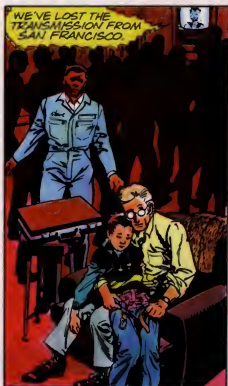




INCOMING MISSILES  
HAVE BEEN DETECTED  
OVER THE ARCTIC.



THIS JUST  
CAME IN...



I DON'T, MALIBERT  
THOUGHT TO HIMSELF BUT  
HE HELD THE BOY IN HIS  
LAP AS TENDERLY AS IF  
HE WERE HIS OWN.



AND THE MISSILES FELL.



HYDROGEN-FUSION  
FLARES ENDED EIGHTY  
MILLION LIVES IN THOSE  
FIRST FEW HOURS.

FIRESTORMS  
FOUNTAINED ABOVE  
A HUNDRED CITIES.



SPLATTERS OF MELTED  
ROCK AND DUST SPRAYED  
INTO THE AIR.



WINDS OF  
THREE  
HUNDRED  
KILOMETERS  
AN HOUR  
PULLED IN  
CARS...



...AND  
DEBRIS...



...AND  
PEOPLE.



AND ALL BECAME RADIOACTIVE  
ASH THAT ROSE INTO THE SKY.







AND THE SKY DARKENED.



THEN IT GREW DARKER STILL.



HE'S MY SON. MY WIFE HAS HIS PASSPORT, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHERE MY WIFE IS.

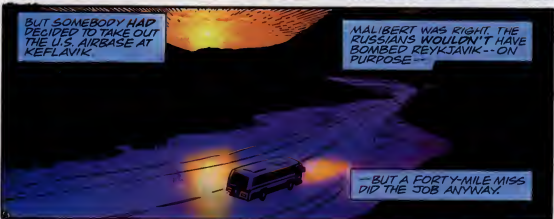


YA, IS GONE, CHICAGO. AND PITTIS-BURRUG, AND CERTAINLY NEW YORK TOO.



IS BAD.

DON'T WORRY, TIMMY. THEY WOULDN'T BOTHER BOMBING REYKJAVIK.



BUT SOMEBODY HAD DECIDED TO TAKE OUT THE U.S. AIRBASE AT KEFLAVIK.

MALIBERT WAS RIGHT. THE RUSSIANS WOULDN'T HAVE BOMBED REYKJAVIK -- ON PURPOSE --

-- BUT A FORTY-MILE MISS DID THE JOB ANYWAY.

THE HUMAN RACE ALWAYS LIVES  
EIGHTY DAYS FROM STARVATION.



AND AN ADDITIONAL  
FORTY DAYS FROM  
EXTINCTION.



EVERY ANIMAL THAT COULD  
BE WAS SLAUGHTERED FOR  
ITS PROTEIN...



...AND ALL HAD  
TO BE EATEN  
BEFORE IT SPOILED.



SEEDLINGS POKED  
UP THROUGH THE DARK  
EARTH FOR SUNLIGHT,  
FOUND NONE, DIED.



IT TOOK TROOPS  
TO CONVOY CORN.



BEFORE LONG  
IT TOOK  
KILLING.

THEN IT COULD NOT  
BE DONE AT ALL.



SO THE CITIES  
STARVED FIRST. AND  
AS THEY STARVED,  
THE RIOTS BEGAN.

THE NEXT WAVE OF  
VICTIMS DIDN'T DIE  
OF HUNGER



THEY DIED OF SOMEONE ELSE'S.

BY THE END OF "SUMMER" EACH  
CITY WAS SURVIVED BY A FEW  
THOUSAND SKINNY, FREEZING  
DESPERADOES.



...EACH GUARDING  
THEIR TROVE  
OF FOODSTUFFS.



MEN COULD WALK ACROSS  
THE FROZEN THAMES AND  
THE HUDSON--THE HWANG  
HO AND THE MISSOURI.



STARVED PREDATORS  
SCRATCHED GRUBS  
FROM DEAD  
TIMBER.

SOME OF THE PRED-  
ATORS WERE HUMAN.

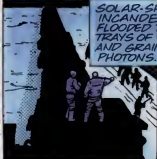
THE WORST WAS THE DARKNESS.

AND THE RAIN.



THE RAIN FELL IN TORRENTS, SHEETS, CASCADES, TURNING TO SNOW AS THE WINTER DARK DEEPENED.

HARRY WAS PUT TO WORK CALCULATING HEAT-LOSS AND PUMPING RATIOS FOR THE PIPED GEOTHERMAL WATER THROUGH THE  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  CHILL TO THE GREENHOUSES.



SOLAR-SPECTRUM INCANDESCENTS FLOODED THE GROWING TRAYS OF VEGETABLES AND GRAINS WITH PHOTONS...

...WHILE HERDS OF SHEEP WERE COLLECTED AND SLAUGHTERED AND STORED OUTSIDE IN THE WORLD'S DEEP-FREEZE.

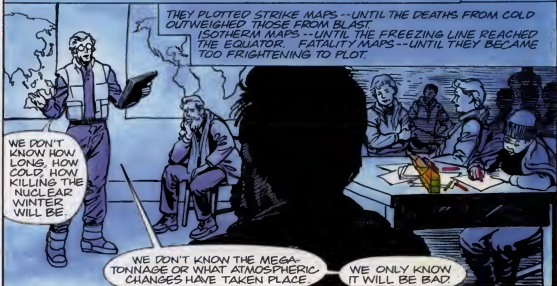


IT WAS A BLESSING THAT REYKJAVIK HAD BEEN NUKED--IT MEANT HALF A MILLION FEWER PEOPLE TO FEED.

HARRY HELD MEETINGS IN THE GASTHUIS WHERE HE LIVED WITH TIMOTHY.

THEY PLOTTED STRIKE MAPS --UNTIL THE DEATHS FROM COLD OUTWEIGHED THOSE FROM BLAST. ISOTHERM MAPS --UNTIL THE FREEZING LINE REACHED THE EQUATOR. FATALITY MAPS --UNTIL THEY BECAME TOO FRIGHTENING TO PLOT.

WE DON'T KNOW HOW LONG, HOW COLD, HOW KILLING THE NUCLEAR WINTER WILL BE.



WE DON'T KNOW THE MEGA-TONNAGE OR WHAT ATMOSPHERIC CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE.

WE ONLY KNOW IT WILL BE BAD.

ON THE RARE TIMES THEY TALKED OF SPACE AND SETI, TIMMY LISTENED CLOSELY.



AND DREAMED OF RADIO MESSAGES FROM WEIRD ALIENS.

OR WORLDSHIPS THAT COULD CARRY A MILLION PEOPLE ACROSS A HUNDRED THOUSAND YEARS.

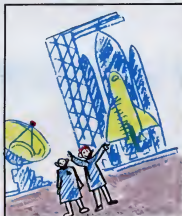




\*FERMI SAID, SINCE THERE ARE BILLIONS OF STARS LIKE OUR SUN, AND OURS HAS PLANETS, OTHER STARS MUST HAVE PLANETS TOO.

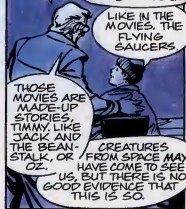


\*AND SINCE ONE OF OUR PLANETS HAS LIVING THINGS ON IT--GERMS AND TREES AND HORSES AND PEOPLE--FERMI WAS CERTAIN OTHER PLANETS HAVE LIFE TOO.



\*MAYBE EVEN PEOPLE AS SMART AS US, OR SMARTER, WHO CAN BUILD SPACESHIPS OR SEND MESSAGES, AS WE CAN.

VERY GOOD, TIMMY. I CAN SEE YOU UNDERSTAND. WELL, FERMI ASKED THE QUESTION, "WHY HAVEN'T SOME OF THESE PEOPLE COME TO SEE US?"



\*WE MUST ASSUME THEY HAVEN'T. SO THERE ARE ONLY THREE POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO DOCTOR FERMI'S QUESTION.



\*ONE, THERE IS NO OTHER LIFE.



\*TWO, THERE IS, BUT THEY WANT TO LEAVE US ALONE.



\*AND THE THIRD REASON...



...IS THAT AS SOON AS PEOPLE GET SMART ENOUGH TO GET INTO SPACE, THEY ALSO BUILD TERRIBLE WEAPONS AND KILL THEMSELVES OFF BEFORE THEY GROW UP.



THE WORLD WAS ETERNALLY DARK NOW. THE RAINS AND SNOWS HAD LONG SINCE STOPPED, SO NOTHING CAME THROUGH THE CLOUDS BUT FAINT LIGHT FROM THE AURORA BOREALIS.

WHEN THE CALL CAME TO EVACUATE AN INJURED CHILD FROM STOKKSNES, ELDA, A NURSE, BEGGED SPACE FOR HARRY AND TIMMY.



IS THAT ONE OF THE THINGS THAT TALK TO THE STARS?



NO, TIMMY. WE'RE TOO FAR NORTH HERE TO SEE THE WHOLE SKY.

MALIBERT SADLY THOUGHT OF THOSE OTHER PLACES-- ARECIBO, WOOMARA, SOCORRO--BROKEN, RUSTED, WASHED AWAY. ALL THOSE EYES ON SPACE BLINDED NOW.



BUT HE WAS GLAD THAT, FOR THE FIRST TIME, TIMOTHY HAD CALLED HIM "DADDY."

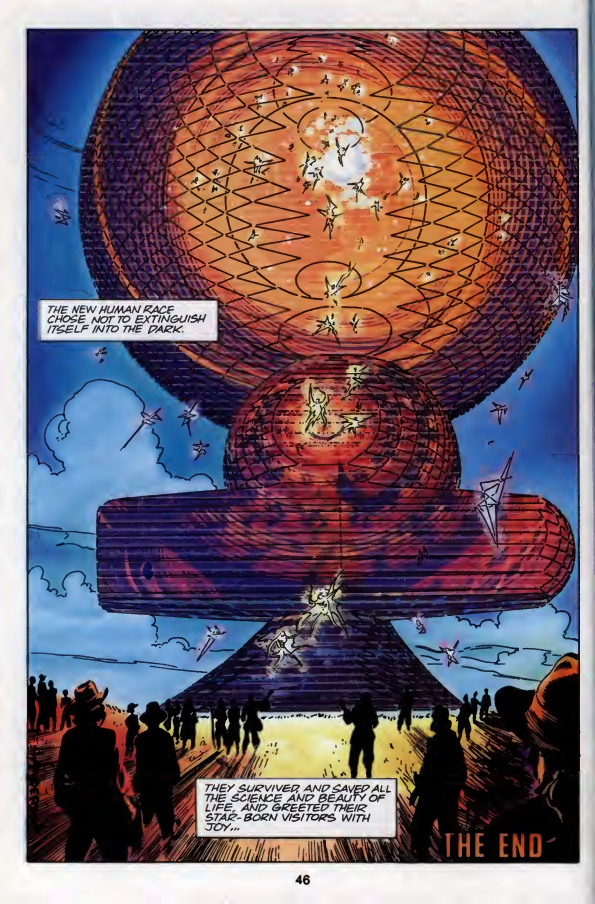


ONE ENDING TO THE STORY IS THAT THE SUN CAME BACK TOO LATE. ICELAND HAD ULTIMATELY STARVED AND FERMI'S TERRIBLE THIRD ANSWER WAS THE RIGHT ONE.

BUT THERE EXISTS ANOTHER ENDING. THE SUN CAME BACK JUST BARELY IN TIME AND TIMOTHY LIVED TO GROW UP.

HE MARRIED ONE OF HARRY AND ELDA'S DAUGHTERS, AND OF THEIR DESCENDANTS-- MAYBE A DOZEN GENERATIONS LATER-- ONE WAS ALIVE ON THAT DAY WHEN FERMI'S PARADOX BECAME A QUAINLY AMUSING OLD WORRY.

ON THAT DAY THE SKIES SPOKE, AND THOSE WHO LIVED IN THEM CAME TO CALL.



THE NEW HUMAN RACE  
CHOSE NOT TO EXTINGUISH  
ITSELF INTO THE DARK.

THEY SURVIVED AND SAVED ALL  
THE SCIENCE AND BEAUTY OF  
LIFE, AND GREETED THEIR  
STAR-BORN VISITORS WITH  
JOY...

THE END

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